

**Testimony of:**

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Wednesday, February 18, 2009

**Appropriations Committee Agency Budget**

To: The Honorable Appropriations Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to make a presentation before you this evening. I am accomplished by grandparents, relative caregivers and guardians, Dammone Jones, Dawn Conner, Laura Brewer, Lillian Morrison, and Maeola Riddick.

We have divided the time allotted and will make our brief presentation within the specified time period.

**The issue is whether it serves the best interest of the state, grandparents, and relative guardians to eliminate the Children's Trust Fund?**

**In my humble opinion it does not.** There are about 60,000 children who are living with grandparents and relative guardians throughout the state. A large number of them have been touched in a positive way by the Children's Trust Fund.

Over the past 10 years I have had the honor to pilot the very first Kinship program for Guardians through the New Haven Probate Court and I have worked with the Children's Trust Fund since that time and watched the agency in developing a healthy, supportive relationship with guardians and grandparents, when these guardians felt they had no other source to turn to. Since that time the Kinship program under the auspices of the children's Trust Fund has expanded and is currently a very successful program throughout the state of Connecticut and has been doing extraordinary work on behalf of grandparents and guardians.

Karen Foley-Schain and her staff have taken many trips to New Haven to attend an event in support of grandparents and guardians, whether these children were going off to college, getting an award or the guardians were involved in a training program to develop more effective parenting skills and resources.

I am speaking of guardians and grandparents who are not receiving foster care assistance. They rely on the Children's Trust Fund not only for the small stipend of \$250 to \$500 Kinship given to the children for developmental, enrichment and health needs, but also for support.

Guardians and grandparents have come to respect and appreciate the Children's Trust Fund. We are blessed to have at least one agency in the state with a reputation for caring about the people they are helping; and in return the people have the perception that they are providing a great service. It would be devastating to guardians that to lose this successful and supportive agency that has very much become a part of the children's growth and development. I hope that you will give consideration to the importance of these families and their need to have a support system that they trust, care about, and one that provides great services to them.

Thank you!